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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0038
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 000862

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STATE FOR EUR FRONT OFFICE, EUR/NCE AND EUR/RPM
SECDEF FOR ISP
JOINT STAFF FOR J5
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2016

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAPS](#) [PREL](#) [PL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF DEFENSE SIKORSKI ON F-16 PROGRAM, IRAQ
DEPLOYMENT

REF: A. WARSAW 833

[1](#)B. IIR 6 878 0337 06 (USDAO WARSAW 021626Z MAY 060)

[1](#)C. WARSAW 761

Classified By: Amb. Victor Ashe, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: Ambassador met one-on-one May 9 with Polish Minister of National Defense Radek Sikorski to review the F-16 program, urging him to appoint a general officer to oversee the program within the Air Force. Sikorski confirmed Poland would maintain its troop strength in Iraq at 900 through January 2007, and said he had not thought reducing troops would have posed a problem or caused the reaction that it did in Washington. He expressed concern about the Russian reaction to any Missile Defense site in Poland, and asked support from the U.S. for the positioning of the NATO Air Ground Surveillance (AGS) System in Poland. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador opened the meeting by reviewing with Sikorski the status of the F-16 program and some of our concerns about the state of Poland's preparations for receiving the jets in November 2006. He urged Sikorski to appoint an Air Force general officer to oversee the program in order to ensure preparations move forward. Sikorski agreed that was necessary and said he would do so by the end of May or early June. He said that he does not personally have the technical background to judge for himself the real state of preparations. He gave no hint of a delay in receiving the F-16 (Ref B), and Ambassador did not raise the issue.

[1](#)3. (C) On Iraq, Sikorski confirmed that Polish troop levels will stay at 900 through January 2007. Sikorski, who two weeks ago floated the idea (Ref C) of reducing troop strength "by 300 to 400 troops," said he was not aware that the numbers of Polish soldiers in Iraq mattered to us as much as the simple fact of Poland's presence. He asserted that the central-south area of Polish responsibility was peaceful. The Poles have turned over much responsibility to Iraqi forces, leading him to conclude that Polish troops were not needed at the same level, and that a reduction of 300-400 troops would not make that much difference. He was surprised the matter had gone so quickly to the presidential level, and confirmed that troop strength will remain stable through the remainder of the year. He noted, however, that the scheduled deployment to Afghanistan in 2007 would require Poland to reduce its troop numbers in Iraq.

¶4. (C) Sikorski raised Missile Defense, saying that the U.S. needed to "fix" Russia's concerns. (Note: The MFA has asked that we do these consultations in coordination with the Poles. End Note) He said that if Russian concerns were not addressed, they would likely put missiles in Kaliningrad or Belarus, threatening Poland.

¶5. (C) Sikorski said his "one wish" was that NATO place the AGS system in Poland. He hoped the U.S. would support placement of the system in Poland. He said he had spoken to General Jones in Brussels, and that Poland's Ambassador to NATO had raised the matter with U.S. Ambassador Nuland. He said Ambassador Reiter has instructions to press the issue in Washington as well.

ASHE